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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2680  
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE IMMEDIATE  
CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL//SCJ33/SCJ34/SCH35//

UNCLAS PANAMA 000882

AIDAC

STATE FOR WHA/CEN MARSHA SINGER  
AIDAC OFDA FOR MILENA POPP; USAID/CEN FOR DONNIE HARRINGTON;  
USAID/CEN FOR EBONY BOSTIC;  
SAN JOSE FOR TIM CALLAGHAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PM](#)

SUBJECT: DISASTER DECLARATION FOR FLOODING IN BOCAS DEL TORO, COLON  
AND CHIRIQUI AREAS OF PANAMA.

¶1. Heavy rains have occurred in the departments of Bocas del Toro, Colon and Chiriqui, overtopping river banks and flooding extensive areas of the affected provinces. According to the U.S. hurricane Center in Miami: heavy rainfall and localized flooding is expected over the next couple of days. As a result, the President of Panama, Martin Torrijos, has declared a state of emergency in the affected areas, mobilizing the nation's civil response mechanism.

¶2. Per reports from the Panamanian emergency response agency (SINAPROC), 5 people have died, at least 2 are missing, and 8 seriously injured as a result of the flooding and associated landslides. 7,451 are in emergency shelters. Panamanian Vice President Arosemena has characterized Bocas del Toro, including both Changuinola and Isla Colon, as without communication and inaccessible. Significant damage to infrastructure has already been verified, including 3 bridges totally destroyed and 1 partially destroyed, as well as significant sections of roads and rivers overflowing their banks. This severely limits the GOP's possible response, especially in already isolated sections of the country, and while on the ground assessments are on-going, reports from GOP civil response and government officials indicates significant threat to life, limb, and well being.

¶3. The GOP has requested bilateral assistance from the U.S. Ambassador. the U.S. Ambassador has determined that the disaster is of sufficient magnitude to warrant U.S. Government (USG) response and that it is in the U.S. interest to do so.

¶4. The GOP has requested helicopter support in the form of one ch-47 chinook, and one uh-60 blackhawk. the U.S. Ambassador endorses USG air support from JTF-bravo on a non-cost reimbursable basis for an initial 72 hour period and subject to extension only with appropriate authorization.

¶4. The ambassador is exercising her disaster assistance authority, and requests that USAID/OFDA provide the amount of us dollars 50,000.

¶5. Mission plans to use the OFDA funds for the local purchase of emergency relief supplies as well as to cover transportation resources and supplies. Mission may also request OFDA materials (kits, plastic sheeting, etc.) and support as emerging on the ground needs indicate.

¶6. Mission will keep OFDA informed of this disaster, and will request additional assistance should the needs justify.

Stephenson